



MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

Vol.28
Fall 2024

WEBSITE: www.mitchell-lama.org

Planning Commission approves Adams' 'City of Yes' program for more housing

In a vote of ten to three, the City Planning Commission in September voted to support Mayor Eric Adams' multi-faceted program to spur around 100,000 new housing units, both market rate and affordable, known as the City of Yes.

The support came at precisely the moment when the mayor was indicted on federal corruption charges. It is unknown whether the indictment will affect the Commission's ruling, or indeed the entire program. Adams has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

'City of Yes' entails significant changes to zoning regulations regarding neighborhood density and building heights, among other issues.

Since announcing the program last year, community boards and others have received it with mixed reactions.

Among the issues debated by the groups are whether the zoning changes, which allow for more and higher structures, would alter the "character" of various neighborhoods; whether the new apartments would be truly affordable, especially to lower income residents; whether the lack of parking spaces for new public housing would inconvenience car owners, and the like.

Responses among communi-

ty boards to the City of Yes have been mixed, to say the least. A report in [City Limits](#) shows which boards support the program totally favorably, conditionally favorably, unfavorably and so on.

Although support from the Planning Commission was a clear win for the Mayor, it is not a guarantee that the program will be implemented.

Final approval must be granted by the City Council, which is not at all assured.

Key elements of program

Following are the key elements of the City of Yes, as reported previously in this publication:

- Establish Universal Affordability Preference, a mechanism to allow new affordable housing to be constructed that is twenty percent larger than under current rules. All the new units will be permanently affordable.

- Rezone 'town centers' to allow for two- to four-storied housing to be constructed atop small commercial buildings along so called town centers — typical "main streets"— with the ground floor spaces to be used for commerce.

- Rescind parking requirements, especially the rule that requires new

(Continued on Page 8)

DiNapoli: HPD fails short on checking hazardous & financial conditions at three M-L developments

The City's department of Housing Preservation and Development, charged with overseeing conditions—both physical and financial—of Mitchell-Lama developments, was given a less than stellar grade in October by State Comptroller Thomas P. Napoli.

[Reviewing](#) three M-L developments, the report found "hazardous/unsafe physical conditions, including façade damage, non-working self-closing/fire doors, and units with mold, water damage, collapsed walls and ceilings, peeling paint, and broken doors and windows."

The M-Ls reviewed were Arverne/Nordeck in Queens, Arlington Terrace/North Shore in Staten Island, and York Hill in Manhattan.

DiNapoli's office also discovered that
(Continued on page 8)

Two city landlord groups unite; tenants face powerful opponents (Page 3)

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Manhattan Towers M-L tenant leader softens view on casinos (Page 8)

Strengthen MLRC. Join today (use form on page 2)

MLRC

**General Membership Meeting
will be held on October 19, 2024
10 a.m. - Noon**

Agenda will include Annual Election to the Executive Board.

Any member interested in running please send an email to info@mitchell-lama.org

The meeting will be held via Zoom. Members will be informed by regular mail and by email.

Contact: Info@mitchell-lama.org

Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition
PO Box 20414
Park West Station
New York, NY 10025

Adams admin seeks to build housing on city-owned sites

An executive order issued by Mayor Eric Adams in August authorizes multiple city agencies to explore if the sites they own can be used for housing.

Although the order does not specify the type of housing—market rate or below-market—it is likely that at least a portion of whatever housing is generated will be rendered affordable. In its first sentence, the order refers to "the production of additional housing at all levels of affordability."

The [order](#) calls for the establishment of an interagency taskforce to "identify potential sites for housing development" and determine if any eventual housing on

those or adjacent sites would or would not interfere with the agencies' general operations.

To be chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Housing, Economic Development and Workforce, the taskforce will comprise such agencies as HPD, Environmental Protection, Parks and Recreation, Sanitation, Police and others.

In turn, the taskforce will confer with a variety of other agencies, including the city's public library systems, Economic Development Corporation, Education Department, NYCHA, Health and Hospitals, and others.

Rezoning of East Bronx promises vast improvements in transportation plus 1700 new affordable homes

A massive rezoning of forty-six blocks in the East Bronx that may well result in seven thousand new homes, and almost 2.5 million square feet of space for community facilities and commercial enterprises, was passed in August by the City Council. If they all come to pass, the expected developments may generate some ten thousand permanent jobs.

Around a quarter of the proposed new housing, or some 1700 units, would be allocated for those earning sixty percent of the area median income, or a little more than \$93,000 for a family of four, as reported in [The City](#).

The Adams administration has agreed to provide \$500 million for the proj-

ect, which includes four Metro-North train stations in various communities— Morris Park, Parkchester/Van Nest and Co-Op City. The new stations are projected to be completed by 2027.

A statement from the [City Council](#) noted the following uses of the money: "\$119 million for renovations and upgrades to local parks and open space, approximately \$12 million for school improvements, approximately \$189 million for street improvements such as lighting, new sidewalks . . . approximately \$170 million in sewer improvements, water line repairs . . . and upgrades to the 49th Precinct station."

UPCOMING EVENTS

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Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition, Inc.

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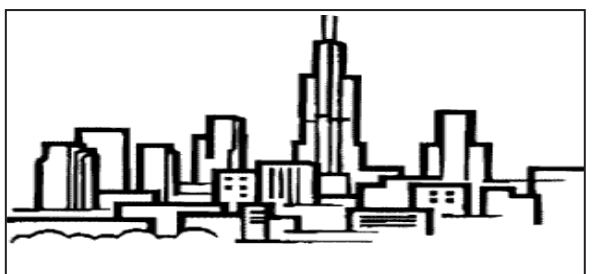
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Circulation: 5,000

Articles, letters and photographs are welcome. Send to MLRC, PO Box 20414, Park West, New York, NY 10025. Fax: (212) 864-8165. Voice Mail: (212) 465-2619. E-mail: information@mitchell-lama.org



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2024

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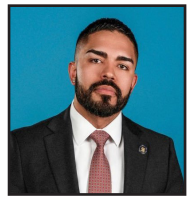
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Two key NYC landlord groups unite; tenants face more powerful opponents

Two New York City landlord groups who have traditionally fought against pro-tenant rent and eviction regulations have officially joined forces, which may well bolster their political lobbying efforts.



Ken Burgos

In September, the Rent Stabilization Association, which represents some 25,000 landlords, and the Community Housing Improvement Program, representing around 400,000 rent stabilized units, announced that they have united into a new group, the [New York Apartment Association \(NYAA\)](#).

Although the two groups have for years battled tenant organizations and pro-tenant government regulations, the new association presents itself as dedicated "to preserve affordable housing for future generations of New Yorkers," and to "provide education and support to renters so they know their rights and responsibilities."

A key ongoing battle site between tenants and landlords has been the annual meeting of the city's Rent Guidelines Board, on which sit representatives of tenants, owners, and the "public." The Board determines to what extent annual rents on stabilized apartments will rise or fall. As is to be expected, the two formerly separate landlord groups and tenant associations have traditionally taken opposite positions on each year's

recommendations.

Commenting on the merger, Cea Weaver, Coalition Director of [Housing Justice for All](#), said that the language of the new group "Isn't fooling anyone – their primary objective is, and always has been, raising rents . . . We won't be misled by flashy rhetoric designed to mask the real estate industry's true agenda: profiting off our backs."

Former Assemblyman leads new association

Heading the new owner group is Ken Burgos, a former State Assemblyman who represented South Bronx district 85. He resigned from the Council in July, saying that the [primary reason](#) for resigning was the birth of his first child.

Two months later, however, he accepted the position as CEO of the brand new NYAA.

In his official statement, Burgos said the newly formed group "can make housing in New York affordable, high quality, and abundant, which will improve the quality of lives for millions of renters, and allow building owners to invest in their buildings and communities."

The chairman of the NYAA, Aaron Sirulnick, who owns properties in Brooklyn and Queens, said the new group will support the establishment of a universal rental voucher system.

Some Jamie Towers residents find carrying charge hikes unaffordable

Months after residents at Jamie Towers, a Mitchell-Lama complex in the Bronx's Castle Hill neighborhood, were hit with a 40.4 percent increase in carrying charges, following a 15.6 percent hike the year before, some of the residents are holding back on their monthly payments.

They acknowledge that their actions may result in being sued, but respond that they simply cannot afford the new hike, according to a report in [The Bronx Times](#).

Among these residents, one woman who "has lived in Building 1 for 22 years, said she is among those not yet paying the increase. Her apartment maintenance costs jumped from \$1,539 to \$2,114 per month . . ."

Many of the residents are elderly, having lived in the complex for years. Jamie Towers is among buildings considered NORCs, or Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities.

To make matters worse, upkeep at the complex is often lacking. *The Times* notes that an audit by State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli last year at Jamie Towers and three other M-L co-ops "found safety hazards – and questionable spending – at all of them."

The DiNapoli audit also found "evidence of financial mismanagement and unsafe physical conditions at the development" and that the state's housing monitoring agency was "falling short of its responsibilities.

Thousands of migrants may soon face eviction from city-run shelters

Some thirty thousand migrants, including children, who are living in the city's shelters are likely to face eviction under a new cost-cutting policy of the Adams administration. Until the summer, they had been spared.

Most migrants in the city currently reside in shelters managed by the Department of Homeless Services.

One consequence of the new policy, given the paucity of alternative affordable housing, is that the city's parks, playgrounds and sidewalks may well become open air bedrooms and living quarters. That bodes



unrest: cities around the country, such as San Francisco, have been authorizing police to remove street-living homeless, leaving the migrant families in a virtually untenable situation.

In response to the new policy, Speaker Adrienne E. Adams of the City Council has introduced a [bill](#) that "would prohibit any city agency from imposing limits on the length of time an individual or family may remain in shelter or emergency congregate housing, provided such individual or family is eligible for temporary housing assistance under State law, as applicable."

In a related development, many more homeless youths were refused residence in shelters between January and July, compared with the year before. In stark numbers that amounted to more than 1100 young people sleeping on sidewalks and other inappropriate and dangerous areas.

* * *

One-time grants of \$4000 offered to some migrants

In yet another a related development, around 150 migrant families have received one-time grants of \$4000 each to leave the shelters and move into regular housing.

Under the City's pilot program, administered by the DHS and known as Asylee Moveout Assistance, the grants are offered to pregnant women and families who are asking for asylum. The recipients have already located their new homes; the grants will be used for moving costs.

More information on the new eviction policy appears in [The Gothamist](#) and [The City](#). More on youths refused entry is available in [The City](#). More one-time grant information is available at [The Gothamist](#).

Justice Dept suit: Real estate tech firm promotes rental price-fixing across USA

A high tech company that gathers confidential real estate information and combines them in an algorithm that allows realtors across the country to set rents—allegedly much higher than if those rents were set simply by what a local market can bear—was sued by the Justice Department in August.

In its civil lawsuit, the government alleges that the algorithm, known as Yieldstar, amounts to a price-fixing collusion.

The company, RealPage, defines itself as a firm that enables real estate owners and managers to "Optimize rents to achieve the overall highest yield, or combination of rent and occupancy, at each property."

A report in the *New York Times* notes that the algorithm "generates suggestions for what landlords should charge renters, and those figures are often higher than they would be in a competitive market, according to allegations in the legal complaint."

Seven states have joined the lawsuit. They are North Carolina, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Minnesota, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington.

The suit alleges that the firm uses confidential data from more than 16 million realtors throughout the

United States.

A report in *ProPublica* states that the lawsuit "comes in the wake of a ProPublica investigation."

As evidence that the firm engages in price fixing, the Justice Department complaint cites this sentence from a RealPage executive, according to *The Guardian*: "There is greater good in everybody succeeding versus essentially trying to compete against one another in a way that actually keeps the entire industry down."

On its [website](#), RealPage has justified its use of confidential data by arguing in part that its real estate customers "always have 100% discretion to accept or reject software price recommendations, are never punished for declining recommendations, and accept recommendations at widely varying rates that are far lower than has been falsely alleged."

Maintaining that the real problem is housing affordability, the firm blames government regulations, implying that high rents result from rules which cause "inflationary pressures that affect costs to build, insure and manage housing properties. . . [and] inefficient or unnecessarily onerous permit and zoning requirements."

Affordable housing developers confronting serious rent arrears

The end of federal and state programs that had provided tenants with lifeline funding and anti-eviction protections during the first years of the Covid pandemic is having an adverse effect on nonprofit affordable housing developers.

As lower income tenants find it increasingly difficult to pay rent, the nonprofit developers, like some of their for-profit peers, are facing huge amounts of rental arrears.

The shortfalls are only adding to the developers' skyrocketing property and liability insurance costs. Taken together, as reported in *Shelterforce*, the developers are finding it increasingly difficult to provide the

services for which they were founded.

While the developers strongly support government programs that protect tenants from unwarranted evictions, they are calling for financial support to accompany those protections, according to Robin Hughes who heads the Housing Partnership Network, a coalition of over one hundred community development organizations in the U.S.

As stated by Chris Persons, who heads Seattle's Community Roots Housing, "The pandemic hurt a lot of industries really badly, but I would make the case that it impacted the affordable housing industry more than most."

200,000 in city win lottery for federal rental vouchers

Fifteen years after cutting off applications for Section 8 rental subsidies, the City announced in August it will be adding around 200,000 households to the waitlist. Some 600,000 households had applied in June.

The lucky applicants, who will pay only thirty percent of their income for rent once they receive the vouchers, were selected through a random lottery system run by NYCHA, as reported in *The Gothamist*. The federal government will pay the rest, up to a "fair market value" as determined through a formula.

NYCHA should soon start issuing a thousand vouchers a month to households on the waitlist.



MLRC Developments

These developments are members of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition

**Individual Membership: \$15 per year
Development Membership: 25 cents per apt
(\$30 minimum; \$125 maximum)**

Donations above membership dues are welcome

Adee Towers	Meadow Manor
Albany Executiver House Apartments	Michangelo Apartments
Amalgamated Warbasse	109th St. Senior Citizens Plaza
Arverne Apartments	158th St & Riverside Dr. Housing
Bethune Towers	Parkside Development
Castleton Park	Pratt Towers
Central Park Gardens	Promenade Apartments
Clayton Apartments	RNA House
Coalition to save Affordable Housing of Co-op City	Riverbend Housing
Concerned Tenants of Sea Park East, Inc.	River Terrace
Concourse Village	River View Towers
Dennis Lane Apartments	Rosedale Gardens Co-op
1199 Housing	Ryerson Towers
Esplanade Gardens	Starrett City Tenants Assn
Franklin Plaza	St. James Towers
Independence House Tenants Assn	St. Martins Towers
Independence Plaza North	Strykers Bay Co-op
Inwood Towers	Tivoli Towers
Jefferson Towers	Tower West
Knickerbocker Plaza	Trinity House
Linden Plaza	Village East Towers
Lindsay Park	Washington Park SE Apts
Lindville Housing	Washington Square SE Apts
Lincoln Amsterdam House	Westgate Tenants Assn
Manhattan Plaza	Westgate
Marcus Garvey Village	Westview Apartments
Masaryk Towers Tenants Assn	West View Neighbors Assn
	West Village Houses

'Social housing' concept receives boost with Ocasio-Smith bill

Housing for people, not for profit," a rallying cry of tenant advocates throughout the country for decades, may now have advocates in the nation's Capitol, as U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) and Senator Tina Smith (D-Minn.) introduced in September a bill known as The Homes Act.

If passed, the bill would "establish a new, federally backed development authority to finance and build homes in big cities and small towns across America," they wrote in a recent [New York Times](#) essay.

Funding for the new entity, to be located with the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, would be provided through Treasury-backed loans as well as general government revenues.

Construction of the permanently affordable homes—both rentals and individual homes such as co-ops and condos—would be done by union laborers; management would be in the hands of groups, including land trusts, tenant associations, various pro-tenant nonprofit organizations, and even local governments.

Capping rents permanently

Rents would be capped permanently at twenty-five percent of tenant incomes. By contrast, tenants receiving federal rent vouchers today pay thirty percent of their income, with the government paying the rest.

Residents seeking to become homeowners would be offered considerable discounts for mortgages.

In a separate [statement](#), Congresswoman Ocasio said that forty percent of the new units would be set aside for extremely-low income households, and thirty percent for general low-income households.

The term the authors use to define their vision is "social housing," an increasingly popular concept implying that the nationwide need for affordable, safe housing is too pressing to remain solely within the private sector, where housing is treated primarily as a form of investment, or profit, rather than as a basic human necessity.

The corporate hunger for these investments has mushroomed in recent years throughout the country, helping to undermine the so-called American dream

of owning one's own home.

In an April 2024 essay in the [Newark Star Ledger](#), for example, the author noted that "Hedge funds, private equity firms and other large institutional investors have been devouring the single family housing market. Numbers differ a few percentage points depending on the source, but in 2022 institutional investors swallowed approximately 30 percent of the available single family housing units, with that number exploding to nearly 45 percent in 2023."

The Ocasio-Smith bill would help to counter this trend, as well as the trend towards ever escalating rents and co-op/condo prices in urban multi-housing developments.

Housing as a human right

"Because we believe that housing is a human right, like food or health care, we believe that more Americans deserve the option of social housing," the authors wrote.

Under the proposal, "every home would be built to modern, efficient standards, which would cut residents' utility costs. Renters wouldn't have to worry about the prospect of a big corporation buying up the building and evicting everyone. Some could even come together to purchase their buildings outright."

The authors cite research from New York University and the University of California indicating that the new entity would likely generate some "1.25 million homes, including more than 850,000 for the lowest-income households."

To be sure, the notion of social housing is hardly new to the United States, with its history of public housing authorities and a plethora of nonprofit or community-based housing construction and management groups.

The tenant advocacy group Housing Justice for All, which supports the Ocasio-Smith bill, noted that it is modeled on the Social Housing Development Authority bill in the New York State legislature.

But on the federal level, significant obstacles stand in the way of expanding the social housing concept. Specifically, the authors cite the federal Faircloth Amendment, passed in 1998, which prohibits the construction of new public housing. The Ocasio-Smith bill would repeal it.

Parkchester to pay \$1 million to settle source-of-income suit

In the largest civil rights settlement in New York City's history, a real estate owner who owns properties in the East Bronx and elsewhere will pay one million dollars in civil penalties to settle a class action lawsuit alleging source-of-income discrimination.

The owner, Parkchester Preservation Management, was sued by the City Commission on Human Rights and the Fair Housing Justice Center for refusing to rent to tenants who had housing vouchers.

As stated in the [settlement](#) released in August, Parkchester "shall consider all types of Rental Assistance when evaluating whether to approve or deny a Rental Application for a Sponsor Unit," and will "accept all types of Rental Assistance towards the payment of rent. . ."

In addition to the huge fine, the company will set aside 850 apartments for tenants holding housing vouchers, the most ever secured in a CCHR settlement, according to a [statement](#) by Mayor Adams.

The firm will also cease any and all income requirements for tenants holding vouchers. Prior to the settlement, the firm had stipulated an annual income of at least \$60,000+ to be considered for rental.

Increased penalties result in more registrations of rent-regulated apartments

A new state law imposing heavy penalties on landlords who fail to register rent-regulated apartments appears to be a success, according to a report by Alyssa Katz in [The City](#).

The law imposes penalties of \$500 a month per apartment on owners who fail to register. Prior to the law's passage, the penalty was a mere ten dollar surcharge.

In previous years, some landlords had illegally removed units from the rent stabilization rolls, and often rented them on a short term basis at market rates, according to the report.

Registration are now up. In the current year, owners have submitted the papers for around 919,500 apartments, up from under 800,000 in recent years.

Windsor Terrace community board rejects reduced rezoning proposal for two 13-story apartment buildings

Community board 7, which oversees developments in Brooklyn's Windsor Terrace, a neighborhood in the central and southern parts of Brooklyn, voted down a new application to rezone the area to make way for the construction of two thirteen-story buildings. If constructed as planned, the complex would contain around two hundred apartments, about a quarter of which would rent at below market rates.

A report in [The Gothamist](#) noted that the community board had earlier gone on record supporting Mayor Eric Adams' "City of Yes" program, which entails rezoning areas to allow for denser housing construction.

But the board's 30 to 6 vote against the proposal in September re-

flected a variety of residents' concerns, ranging from the view that the development would be out of place in the near-suburban atmosphere of the neighborhood to arguments that the proposed housing did not include a sufficient amount of affordable units.

The board had previously rejected a much more invasive rezoning proposal. The land is currently owned by the industrial laundry company Arrow Linen Supply.

The rejection by the board, however, does not necessarily put an end to the proposal. On the contrary, an even larger development proposal might be supported by the City Planning Commission, which is not bound by any community board's position.

Class action lawsuit alleges owner used fictitious repairs to raise rents, evict tenants

A limited liability real estate corporation that owns buildings in Harlem and Hamilton Heights was sued by a group of tenants who maintain that the firm, under managing member Edward Ostad, used repairs the firm never made to raise the rents of some tenants, and evict at least one tenant who had been rent-stabilized.

Ostad owns properties throughout the city, including walkups and other building types in Hell's Kitchen, Yorkville,

and the West Village. The suit, however, is against the firm, not Ostad himself.

Tenants in three buildings at West 151st Street and West 135th Street alleged, among other things, that the firm removed a rent stabilized tenant on the grounds of incurring renovation costs of at least \$117,730, which would lift the eviction protections, when in fact official records show total costs of improvement amounted to only \$40,000.

New group seeks 'City of Yes' funding for low-income housing in Manhattan

A newly formed coalition of local businesses and nonprofits is urging Mayor Eric Adams to set aside \$3.6 billion under the City of Yes program "to create permanently affordable cooperative housing in office-to-residential conversions slated for Manhattan's Midtown South," according to a report in [City and State](#).

Member groups include the Urban Homesteading Assistant Board, AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust, 1 Worker-1 Vote, the National Cooperative Bank, the National Cooperative Business Association, Mutualist Society, Council of New

York Cooperatives and Condominiums, and Inclusiv (a community development credit union serving low- and moderate-income people and communities).

In a statement, the CEO of the National Cooperative Bank said "Many residents are displaced from living where they work. By providing access to shared equity, affordable housing, residents will help stabilize the local economy, strengthen the civic infrastructure and anchor populations of workers who pay taxes and plan to stay in New York City."

NYCHA's Coney Island tenants reject transfer to new Preservation Trust

Tenants at NYCHA's Coney Island Houses rejected a proposal in August to have the sixty-six-year-old development move from the Authority to a newly created nonprofit Trust. Instead, they voted to retain the development as it is, which keeps it dependent on NYCHA to make the needed repairs.



Famed Coney Island Parachute

The purpose of the Trust, created last year, is to enable NYCHA to raise money by floating bonds—in effect, to increase its ability

to borrow.

Slightly more than half of the tenants chose to vote, according to a report in [The City](#).

Votes against the move totaled 239. Another 125 voted to join, and an additional 25 voted to move the complex into a program known as RAD, under which NYCHA retains ownership but management is transferred to a private company.

Since it was established, the Trust has won the endorsement of several other NYCHA developments, including Nostrand Houses, Unity Towers, and Bronx River Houses.

A [release](#) from NYCHA noted that it estimates repairs and maintenance at Coney Island Houses will amount to more than \$230 million over the next two decades.

* * *

Coney Island offered as site for 415 affordable units

Elsewhere in the famed oceanside section of Brooklyn, if a developer gets approval for rezoning an area behind a 19-story building, the neighborhood could be the recipient of 415 new apartments that would rent below market rate.

Proto Property Services, based on Kingsbridge Avenue in the Bronx, has proposed a plan to rezone an area behind Ocean Towers, located on West 24th Street, on which it would construct a 17-story tower containing 415 affordable units. All the units would be rented to people earning sixty percent of the area's median income.

The plan calls for the proposed building to share a courtyard with an adjacent complex, Ocean Towers, and would provide retail space and a parking lot, according to a report in [Bisnow](#), an online real estate reporting service.

Affordable Housing News from Around the Nation

National: Homeless veterans can now receive rental vouchers

Disabled veterans who had been denied access to federal rental vouchers because they also receive disability checks will now be entitled to the subsidies, under a new policy from HUD and the VA. The change no longer counts the disability checks as disqualifying income for vets seeking permanent supportive housing. According to [Stars and Stripes](#), eligibility restrictions will be set at 80% of area median income, replacing the former 50%, which will allow for more vets to apply.

National: New HUD funding grants can be used for tenant organizing

The Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded ten million dollars in grants in September for "capacity building" efforts among low-income tenants living in HUD's Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA) program. The funds can be used for "training and technical assistance, as well as establishing and operating tenant organizations," HUD said in a statement.

Boston: Hospital allocates \$18 million for housing

Massachusetts General Hospital, the largest teaching hospital affiliated with Harvard University, has allocated \$18 million for affordable housing, explaining that inadequate shelter has a profound effect on the mental and physical health of the population. At a press conference announcing the grants, Boston's [commissioner of public health](#) noted that the lack of decent affordable homes "can expose people to hazards like mold and lead. . . Substandard housing too often leads to respiratory problems, developmental delays in children and other chronic health conditions" and [overcrowding] "can contribute to the spread of infectious diseases, which we all saw so clearly during the COVID-19 pandemic."

LA: City to pay \$40 million for neglecting to include accessibility in new housing

Because Los Angeles misused federal affordability grants by neglecting to make the housing it constructed accessible to people with handicaps, it agreed to a settlement that will cost it almost \$40 million, according to the [Los Angeles Times](#). Federal law requires that

at least five percent of units constructed with federal funds be adaptable for people with difficulty moving; an additional two percent must be used for people who are blind or have hearing impairments.

Washington state: Tenants hit with "junk fees" by landlords

Low- and moderate-income tenants, many with rental vouchers, are often hit with what they term "junk fees" or penalties for such minor issues as letting grass turn brown during summer months, plumbing problems they did not cause, receiving delivery notices, unmade beds, leaving some bulk items in front of a garage, and the like. Tenants say these fees are nothing more than landlord harassment. According to a report on [Oregon Public Broadcasting](#), if the tenants were living a few miles south in Oregon or Seattle, they would not have to pay most or any of them. But Washington so far has allowed the fees to remain.

Washington, D.C.: Owner charged with illegal use of vouchers

Section 8 vouchers, a lifeline for many lower income tenants, have been used by a D.C. developer to charge higher rents than legally allowed, while keeping buildings he has purchased in deteriorating conditions, according to two lawsuits filed by the district's Attorney General.

The developer, Ali "Sam" Razjooyan, is being accused of buying up buildings in disrepair, and then "illegally renovating vacant apartments and then renting these units for above-market rents to people exiting homelessness or receiving housing vouchers," as reported by [The Washington Post](#).

"Razjooyan's business model involves forcing tenants to live in deplorable, unsafe, horrific conditions that are shocking to the conscience," the AG said.

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla: Huge development proposed by billionaire family

The Ansins, a billionaire family and owner of Sunbeam Properties, has [proposed](#) building a mixed-use development called Park Miramar on 126 acres about twenty miles southwest of Fort Lauderdale. The plan calls for 2,874 apartments, of which about one hundred, or around three percent, would be below market. Those units would be available to those earning around \$114,000 for a family of three.

Local Housing Briefs

City cuts \$25 million for program to combat tenant harassment

Financial cuts to the city's Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection program for the next three fiscal years amount to more than \$25 million. The program has enabled attorneys for tenants to "compel landlords to make building-wide repairs, and maintain good conditions for tenants in the city's aging affordable housing stock," as reported by Jeanemarie Evely in [City Limits](#).

The cut funds will be redirected to a separate city program, known as Right-to-Counsel, which enables tenants facing eviction to be represented by attorneys. But unlike the goal of Right-to-Counsel, the AHTP attorneys have often been successful in preventing eviction proceedings in the first place, by stopping landlord efforts to deregulate rent-stabilized apartments or allow disrepairs to fester.

In effect, the city cuts pit two groups of pro-tenant lawyers against each other.

City Council awards Penn South capital improvement grant

Penn South, an early affordable housing complex co-op in Manhattan's Chelsea district, has been awarded \$700,000 for capital improvements by New York City Council Member Erik Bottcher and Speaker Adrienne Adams. On August 14, near the complex, Councilmember Bottcher symbolically handed the funds to board president Ambur Nicosia.

Tracey Towers residents commemorate 50th anniversary

Residents of Tracey Towers, a two-tower Mitchell-Lama rental complex at Mosholu Parkway in The Bronx that opened in 1974, and the site of an outbreak of Legionnaires' Disease in 2019 and a major fire in 2021, celebrated the complex's fifty-year anniversary in August. While acknowledging that the towers help to foster a sense of community, residents often complain of poor living conditions, including broken elevators, lack of general maintenance, and rats. The management company blames ongoing rent arrears as a consequence of the pandemic, according to a report in [The Norwood News](#).

Elizabeth St garden fight nears end

The battle of Manhattan's Elizabeth Street garden, which has pitted advocates of preserving green space against those of more affordable housing—two groups normally supportive of each other—may be nearing an end, according to a report in [Patch](#). The City is set to start evicting the garden in September for construction of 123 units of affordable senior housing, plus some open space.

Tenant leader at Manhattan Plaza appears to soften opposition to casinos

Ever since casino owners began in earnest to seek approval for a Las Vegas-style gambling center in Times Square, members of the community, including tenants at Manhattan Plaza, a Mitchell-Lama development largely housing actors and other members of the theater and entertainment industry, have fought vociferously against it.

Among the opposition leaders was Aleta LaFargue, a long-time resident and president of the tenants association. As late as October 2023, she condemned the proposals as predatory, according to a report in *The City*.



Times Square

"When people think of Times Square," she reportedly said, "they don't realize that it's adjacent to a residential area where the people are really in jeopardy of falling prey to the predatory business that a casino is."

That was then.

Today, however, she has been considerably more open to at least one of the proposals, presented by Roc Nation, an entertainment company owned by the rapper Jay-Z.

"We are here to listen to what they have to say, what they have to offer," she said at a recent tenants association meeting, which was also addressed by a Roc Nation executive and other casino supporters.

What accounts for the abrupt change in attitude?

Perhaps the fact that she has been offered "a \$20,000-a-month contract to

work as an independent consultant for Roc Nation," *The City* reported.

Her duties under the contract, which she has claimed she has not yet signed, include advising and supporting "Roc Nation as it relates to community engagement."

In this capacity, she would "provide strategic counsel as it relates to assisting the Company with its mission to have a positive social impact."

In effect she would be using her status as a long time community leader to facilitate a more positive response to Roc Nation's casino proposal.

Although she claims not to have signed any contract, she explained the situation this way: "They've asked, would I help them understand the community better. And this is the same thing I've offered to Related and the same thing we offer to Silverstein if you want to come here." Related and Silverstein are two other developers seeking approval for gambling casinos.

In a letter to *The City*, she said her "role in the Tenants Association is to promote the tenants' wishes; that is what I have done, and that is what I will continue to do."

Notwithstanding this latest development, opposition to casinos in the area appears strong. A coalition of residents, businesses and other community groups has said gambling casinos "act as magnets for local gamblers and prey on vulnerable populations. A Times Square casino would bring economic and social disruption, not development, and make our community less welcoming to families from all over the world."

DiNapoli: HPD fails short on checking hazardous & financial conditions at three M-L developments

(Continued from page 1)

several hazardous conditions previously reported by a separate agency (the Housing Development Corp.) "either remained uncorrected or persisted."

Regarding financial irregularities, the state audit found "approximately \$1.6 million in transactions for the period from January 2019 through August 2023 that were either unrelated to normal operations or inadequately supported."

The report concludes with several recommendations, include annual inspections and "routinely checking to verify

that all self-closing/fire doors are fully operational," and then taking "immediate corrective action when hazardous/unsafe conditions are identified."

Regarding financial problems uncovered by the audit, the state recommends "Periodically reviewing a sample of contracts and expenses to identify payments to vendors and service providers that, in the aggregate, equal or exceed \$100,000 in any fiscal year, to ensure that they are competitively bid and that contracts at \$100,000 or more were approved by HPD."

Planning Commission OKs Adam's 'City of Yes' program for more housing

(Continued from Page 1)

housing construction to include parking space. The freed up space would allow for more residences.

- Revise public transit impediments to "allow apartment buildings between three and five stories on large lots near transit stops in places where they will blend with the existing neighborhood."

- Enable Accessory Dwelling Units to permit cottages, garages and basements to convert to apartments. This would "legalize an additional dwelling unit of up to 800 square feet on one- and two-family properties across the five boroughs."

- Convert empty offices by updating the year of permissible conversion of unused or under-used office space to homes to 1990, and by extending geographic eligibility to anywhere in the city where housing is allowed.

- Maximize campus use to allow for construction of housing on open campuses that abut current housing and religious institutions.

- Modify shared living space to allow more smaller-sized apartments so that single adults would not have to live with roommates, and to re-legalize homes with shared kitchen or bathroom facilities.

More youths seeking shelter were denied access this year according to new City data

More young people in New York City who have no homes but were denied shelter, and were therefore most likely forced to sleep on the streets, leapt this year, according to data released by the Department of Youth and Community Development.

A report in *The City* noted that the Department's data showed more than eleven hundred adolescents who sought a place to sleep were denied facilities. That is an historically high figure.

Among them are an increasing number of asylum seekers, although the actual percentage of homeless youths seeking asylum was not tracked by the Department.

By comparison with youths, almost all homeless adults who sought shelter were likely to find one.